

Data-Level Measurement: Conceptual Clarification and Practical Advances

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Abstract

Data-level metrics represent a pathway to advance open sharing of scientific data, aiming to recognize researchers' contributions to data-related work. Within the context of data sharing, data-level metrics primarily concern measurements associated with data publishing and data citation, including but not limited to Altmetric and article-level metrics (ALM). In data-level metrics, "data citation" extends beyond traditional references between publications to encompass multiple relationships between data and literature, data and datasets, and data and data, while further focusing on "data," "scholarly records," and "individuals" closely associated with scholarly records. Data-level metrics involve three core concepts: data sharing, data citation, and data publishing. Based on the scientific research data rights and interests management process, the author has established a research framework encompassing 24 categories of generalized scientific research data, along with the rights and interests relationships, forms, and policies pertaining to scientific research data. Libraries can fully leverage existing data to develop novel knowledge services.

Full Text

Abstract

Open access to scientific and technological information has become a developmental strategy and target for major S&T countries worldwide. However, open access to research data still confronts challenges in the implementation process. Data Level Metrics (DLM) is an approach to forward scientific data open access, which aims to identify researchers' contribution to data work. This paper reviews the literature of Bibliometrics, Scientometrics, Informetrics, Webometrics, Altmetrics, and Article Level Metrics (ALM), and discusses DLM in the field of Infodemiology and its possible application. DLM refers to metrics that are related to data publishing and data citation in the data sharing environment, including but not limited to Altmetrics and ALM. DLM involves three

core concepts: data sharing, data citation, and data publishing, with further focus on the “data,” the “scholar records,” and the “person” who is closely related to scholar records. Different from various literature-oriented metrics and methods, DLM attempts to record, count, and measure the publishing, citation, and sharing of research data. In DLM, data citation is not only counted by using references between literatures but is also extended to the multiple relationships between data and literature, data and dataset, data and data, and embedded in the data lifecycle, the research lifecycle, the research data management workflow, and the rights management. According to the research data rights management workflow, this paper establishes a framework which includes 24 items of the general research data, the relationships between rights and interests, forms and policies. DLM can be used in many fields including Chinese academic journals, institutional repositories, academic evaluation, intelligence research, and information services. Libraries can provide new services by making full use of existing data. The limitation of this study is that our results are only based on literature review and accordingly a theoretical framework is set up. Therefore, implementation schemes are to be explored in future practice.

1 Trends in Open Sharing of Scientific Data and the Birth of Data-Level Metrics

The concept of open access to scientific information was proposed in three major declarations: the Budapest Open Access Initiative (2002), the Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing (2003), and the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities (2003). The OECD Principles and Guidelines for Access to Research Data from Public Funding (2004) revealed the basic principles of data sharing, defining openness as providing open access to research data at the lowest cost for the international research community. The Royal Society’s report “Science as an Open Enterprise” (2012) stated that science is based on open communication of scientific theories and their empirical and observational data. The U.S. Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) mandated that research data from federally funded projects should be stored and made publicly accessible. The European Union’s Horizon 2020 program includes open access to scientific publications and their underlying data. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, in his speech at the 2014 Global Research Council Beijing Conference, urged support for establishing open access mechanisms for publicly funded scientific knowledge.

Despite widespread agreement among scientists about the benefits of data sharing, implementation remains challenging. Most researchers have reservations about actual execution. Data sharing is a prerequisite for establishing data metrics, while data metrics can, in turn, promote data sharing, though this requires long-term observation and active development.

2 Historical Heritage and Development Elements of Data-Level Metrics

Data-level metrics inherits from traditional bibliometric disciplines. Bibliometrics, pioneered by scholars like Pritchard (1969) and Nalimov (1969), applies mathematical and statistical methods to study communication through books and other media. Informetrics, introduced by Nacke (1979), extends these methods to information processing. Tague-Sutcliffe (1992) distinguished between these fields while noting their interrelationships. Chinese scholar Qiu Junping considers bibliometrics the foundation for informetrics and scientometrics development.

The limitations of traditional metrics became apparent with the Journal Impact Factor (JIF). The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA, 2013) criticized JIF's negative influence on research assessment, noting its susceptibility to manipulation. This led to new approaches like Article-Level Metrics (ALM) and Altmetrics, which incorporate social media and usage data beyond citations.

Data-level metrics builds upon this evolution, shifting focus from literature to research data. It attempts to record, count, and measure the publication, citation, and sharing of datasets rather than just publications. This requires extending citation analysis beyond references between papers to include relationships between data and literature, data and datasets, and data and data itself.

3 Development and Application of Data-Level Metrics

Data-level metrics provides potential incentives for data sharing by recognizing contributions to data work. It is a relatively new concept not yet widely applied in scientific publications. Currently, no standard exists for identifying all participants throughout the data lifecycle.

DLM involves three core concepts: data sharing, data citation, and data publishing. Data sharing requires systematic collection of usage statistics to accurately and objectively assess value and impact. Data citation refers to formally referencing data sources in publications, enabling attribution and impact tracking. Data publishing involves releasing datasets as citable academic products, though this model faces criticism for not accommodating all sharing scenarios.

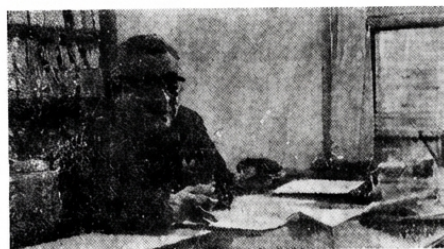
Unlike traditional metrics, DLM precisely calculates relationships between datasets and individual contributions. It considers the entire research lifecycle, from data collection to publication.

and [FIGURE:2] illustrate the evolution from traditional citation relationships to the expanded relationships considered under DLM.

A framework for analyzing rights and interests in research data is essential. Based on research data rights management workflows, DLM can track contribu-

—In Lieu of an Introductory Statement

(Member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences,
President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences)



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Figure 1: Figure 1

tions at each stage, including data production, processing, and reuse. presents a research framework for rights/interest relationships, forms, and policies related to research data.

4 Resource Systems and Services Related to Library Development

Data-level metrics builds upon existing information resource systems and services. Key infrastructure includes identifier systems such as DOI for digital objects, ORCID for researchers, and DataCite for datasets. These enable tracking of data publications and citations across platforms.

Libraries can leverage these systems to provide new knowledge services. By integrating usage data from institutional repositories and other platforms, libraries can offer altmetric analysis, evaluation support, and reference consultation. The convergence of open access, open knowledge, and open innovation creates opportunities for libraries to become partners in research and learning support.

Chinese and Taiwanese library scholars have actively researched altmetrics applications. Studies have explored altmetric indicators for paper impact, correlations between different metrics, and applications in institutional repositories. This positions libraries to play a significant role in promoting data sharing and developing DLM practices.

5 Limitations and Development Prospects

Data-level metrics remains an underdeveloped concept with several limitations. Current research is primarily theoretical, lacking empirical implementation schemes. The field faces uncertainty about future directions and standards.

Key challenges include: understanding research data value, protecting and recognizing contributions to data work, evaluating data sharing benefits, and incorporating data contributions into research assessment. New metrics must transcend traditional journal-based indicators to properly value diverse research outputs.

The development of DLM is crucial for creating a virtuous cycle of data sharing. By providing recognition for data work and enabling detailed analysis of contributions, DLM can support scientific progress and knowledge growth. Libraries and information professionals are well-positioned to advance this field through their expertise in information management and emerging metric tools.

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